

SUNDAY, JULY 26, 1903

THE NURSING of COWSLIP

BY ELIZA ORNE WHITE

IT ALWAYS was easy for Miss Deborah to make a choice, and she had chosen Cowslip with hardly a moment's hesitation. Therefore, it was not Lucy's advice she wanted, but merely the support of her admiration. Cowslip was a pretty Alderney. The only fault that could be found with her looks was a white patch placed on her face in an irregular way, which Lucy felt instinctively would be very trying to Letitia, and yet it did not seem of sufficient importance to prevent the purchase.

When the cow arrived the whole family went out to the barn to see her installed, and John, Esther and the children were loud in their praises. Miss Letitia looked at her in a more critical spirit.

"How many cows did you have to choose from?" she asked Deborah.

"Three."

"I should think you might have found a better looking one."

"Why, I love that deep fawn color," said Esther.

"The color is all right, but that white patch on her face drives me wild. It is so one-sided."

"I didn't think about that," said Deborah.

"I never knew anyone with so little aesthetic sense as you have," Letitia remarked placidly. "I should have bought a cow that was not conspicuous. However, if you and Lucy like her, it is of no consequence whether I am satisfied. I am quite accustomed to accepting the choice of others. Only I can't see how two people with average eyes could have looked at that cow without noticing that the white spot gave her a weird expression. Her milk will be just as good," she added with an assumption of cheerfulness.

Miss Deborah's pleasure in the possession of the cow was considerably dampened. She tried to recollect whether Daisy and Dandelion had white spots on their faces, and went so far as to suggest that they might effect an exchange.

"No," said Miss Letitia. "You have bought her and it is best to keep her."

Letitia had nothing but the highest praise to give Cowslip's milk and cream. "I had no idea there was such a difference between cow's milk and milkman's milk," she observed graciously.

The baby's drooping health revived, the children took long draughts of milk at frequent intervals and the family revelled in desserts with an accompaniment of whipped cream. They were a happy family for a month and then Cowslip fell ill.

"I have always heard that Alderneys are more delicate than any other cows," Miss Letitia observed ominously at breakfast one morning.

"Look here, Letitia Wyatt," said Miss Deborah. "I will stand a great deal from you, but that is a little too much. The next time we have a cow you may choose her and see to the whole care of her. I had the bother of buying Cowslip, and I have had no end of trouble with her first and last, and I won't stand being criticised."

Letitia looked at her sister reproachfully. Deborah's occasional outbreaks of temper were one of the chief trials of her lot. They were so unreasonable, so unprovoked.

"My dear," she said gently, "it was not criticising. I was merely stating a fact. Miss Letitia had never ceased to be thankful that she had inherited her mother's even temper."

"I was a beast," Miss Deborah owned remorsefully. "I am tired with anxiety about Cowslip. She is a dear creature and she looks at me this morning with such sad, reproachful eyes, begging me to do something to help her. Heaven knows I would spend my life with her if it would do any good."

"Why don't you hold an umbrella over her, Aunt Deborah," Jack suggested.

"I have been thinking of something of the kind. The veterinary surgeon says she is too ill to be moved. We can't even get her into the shade. Patrick has tied a wet sponge to her horns, but she still feels the heat. I proposed to Patrick that he should make some sort of a shelter for her, but he didn't see it in that light. He was 'driv' with other work."

"That is the trouble with having only a tenth of a man. When I am rich I shall keep a whole one. I wish Laura Macaulay would lend me her sketching umbrella."

Lily and Jack dashed off in quest of Miss Macaulay. They were not commissioned to do so, but thought it well to take time by the forelock.

Laura Macaulay, cool and self-contained, was sitting on the piazza with the latest Atlantic Monthly in her hands, when two breathless, dishevelled children rushed up to her.

"Please, Miss Laura, Aunt Deborah wants to borrow your sketching umbrella," panted Jack.

"Your Aunt Deborah wants to borrow my sketching umbrella?" Miss Macaulay repeated incredulously. She had never associated the arts with Miss Deborah Wyatt.

"It is for the cow," Lily explained.

Miss Macaulay was under the impression that somebody wanted to make a sketch of Miss Deborah's favorite. "Who paints at your house?" she inquired.

"It is for the cow," Lily repeated. "She is sick and we thought it would be a good plan to hold an umbrella over her, and yours is the biggest in town."

"Did your Aunt Deborah send you here?"

"She didn't exactly send us," Lily confessed. "She just wished you would lend her the umbrella, and so we came for it to save time."

Miss Macaulay's sense of humor was not of the keenest, but the picture of Miss Deborah Wyatt, who had always scorned the amount of wasted time that the sketching umbrella represented, being reduced to abjectly horrible for her cow appealed even to her. She threw back her head and laughed.

"The cow is real sick," said Jack. "I don't see why you think it's so funny."

"We've got it, Aunt Deborah," the children said a little later, as they thrust the sketching umbrella into Miss Deborah's astonished hands.

"My dear children! Who told you to go for that umbrella?"

"We thought we would surprise you."

"It was only joking. I never dreamed of really borrowing Laura's sacred umbrella. Letitia, do you think I ought to send it back?" Miss Deborah's outbreak of temper left her in a chastened mood. Under these circumstances she was willing to ask her sister's advice.

"I don't know. What did she say, children?"

"She laughed and laughed when she heard the cow was sick. I guess she wouldn't think it was so funny if it was her cow. And she said—what was it she said, Lily?"

"She said, 'Please give my compliments to your Aunt Deborah, and tell her I am glad she can find such a good use for my sketching umbrella.'"

"You may as well keep it, as she was kind enough to send it," Letitia counseled. So the umbrella stayed. Miss Deborah and the children went with it into the inclosure behind the garden, where the cow was stretched limply on the grass. Miss Deborah planted the umbrella firmly in the ground and its generous shade kept the sun from poor Cowslip's head.

"There," said Miss Deborah when her work was accomplished, "I am glad that umbrella is doing a useful deed for once in its life. Children, run in and ask your Aunt Letitia to give you the big palm-leaf fan that stands on the top of the right-hand bookcase in the library, and I will fan this poor creature; the flies are troubling her. And bring out the little camp stool."

There was nothing funny to the children in the picture their Aunt Deborah made as she sat on her camp stool that hot forenoon waving her large palm-leaf fan, and it is safe to assert that the humorous side did not strike Cowslip. Miss Letitia was amused when she sallied out toward 12 o'clock to see how her sister was faring.

"Deborah, you look too absurd in your short skirt with that huge fan under that immense umbrella. You remind me of a toad under a toadstool. I never saw anything so funny in my life."

"I am glad if you are amused," said Miss Letitia. "I wish you could see yourself," said Miss Letitia, and she laughed again. "Perhaps you would like me to send your dinner to you," she said ironically. "I should like to swear at you, Letitia Wyatt, that is what I should like. You are enough to drive a saint crazy."



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"I didn't mean to make you angry. I never can tell what is going to make you angry," Letitia remarked in an injured tone. "It was merely in fun. You can usually see the funny side of things as well as anyone."

"If you think it is easy to see the funny side of the dangerous illness of your only cow, when you have had to take care of a shelter in a service, you can take your turn and try it. I am a little tired and will give you my place to you willingly."

"Thank you. The sun always gives me a headache. It is lucky that I am so constituted that I like the scorching sun."

"Deborah, dear, I am sure you are very tired. Do leave that cow to herself. A few flies will hurt her. You are of more importance than the cow. If she is going to die she will die, and if she is going to get well she will get well."

"Good-by, Letitia Wyatt. I have enjoyed your call exceedingly, but I think you ought not to stay out any longer in the broiling sun."

"Why don't you get Lily and Jack to fan her?"

"Why don't I get chain lightning to help me?"

"Deborah, I insist, for your own good, upon your coming into the house at once."

"Letitia, I won't."

Miss Deborah had been fully intending to take a recess, but she was not going to be ordered in by Letitia.

Miss Letitia went back and held a family council. As the result Lucy came out presently with a glass of lemonade and a piece of sponge cake.

"Now, Deborah, just let me fan Cowslip for a few minutes," she coaxed, as her sister gratefully accepted the proffered lunch.

"My dear, you will get a sunstroke. I shall not allow it on any account."

"Then come in with me. When it gets cooler you can fan her again."

"I am going to fan Cowslip as long as I like."

When she came home a little later he was taken into Miss Letitia's confidence.

"Your Aunt Deborah has one of her obstinate fits," she informed him. "She will stay and fan that cow until she drops."

"Aunt Deborah or the cow?"

"It is no joking matter. It is preposterous, a middle-aged lady, sitting under a sketching umbrella, fanning a cow and declaring that she will not be dictated to by anybody. Try if you can't make her listen to reason, John."

John obediently went out to the inclosure. "It is a pleasant day, Aunt Deborah," he began blandly.

"A trifle warm?" he suggested.

"Give me that fan. I want to try fanning Cowslip a minute."

She rose from her camp stool and let him take her place.

"How long have you been out here?" he inquired, as he swung the fan briskly back and forth.

"Sixteen years, judging by my feelings."

"I thought so. It is six months since I came out."

"Do you think 'cowslip' is going to die?" Miss Deborah inquired anxiously.

"I am pretty sure, if you and I both sacrifice our lives for her sake, she won't."

"The two did not talk the conventional crook's language. Both were men of some education and had been clever enough to avoid the habit."

They had dinner before they came, but they had ordered a game supper at 12, and are playing cards in a private room in the meantime. They don't like a four-handed game, and they want another player if I will introduce him, so they are certain he is straight, and the fat scoundrel chuckled wickedly. "Would you like me to introduce you?"

"John, don't be obstinate."

"If I am, I inherited the trait from a collateral."

"Give me that fan."

"Don't you wish you could get it?"

"John, you are behaving like a boy of 10."

"Aunt Deborah, you are behaving like a girl of 6."

"Well, perhaps you are right. I don't know what has got into me today. She remembered that the entry window was wide open, and that the carpet would get soaked, but she was too tired to care. A blinding flash of lightning and an almost instantaneous peal of thunder recalled her sharply to this world."

"Cowslip!" she cried. "The poor dear will die of cold."

Forgetting her fatigue, she hastily flung on her hat and white outing flannel wrapper and, slipping her bare feet into her rubbers, seized a couple of old blankets and started for the front door. In the entry she paused and gave a hurried glance at the umbrella stand. Laura Macaulay's sketching umbrella was

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thrust like an unwilling guest in among the Wyatts' trim silk ones.

"It will spoil the looks of it," she said: "but no matter. It is in a good cause. I shall have to get her another. I suppose they are expensive; never mind. I hope she hasn't any tender associations with it, but if she has they must go."

Hastily taking the umbrella, she unlocked the door and started for the inclosure. The blinding flashes of lightning enabled her to find her way. In the intervals of darkness she paused occasionally to rest. When Deborah reached Cowslip at last, she draped the blankets over her and planted the sketching umbrella firmly in the ground. It was large enough to keep off most of the rain.

"There, poor dear, I have done my level best for you," she said. "If you die it will not be my responsibility."

Meanwhile one member after another of the Wyatt household was awakened by the peals of thunder.

"Deborah," Letitia called to her sister, "the entry window is open."

There was no answer. Deborah always looked after the windows, but as it was evident that she was asleep Letitia rose reluctantly and went to shut it herself. The rain was beating in violently and splashed on her face and hands.

Lucy in her pale blue wrapper came softly down stairs. "I am afraid to be up in the third story all alone in this awful storm," she confessed as she sought the safe harbor of Deborah's room.

"Come in to me, dear," said Letitia.

Lucy was standing on the threshold of Deborah's door.

"Deborah isn't there?" she exclaimed.

"Nonsense. Of course she is there; she is asleep. 'Come and see for yourself.'"

The two sisters looked at the crumpled bedclothes and the pillow, with its recent indentations, and then at each other.

"I believe she has gone out to the cow," said Letitia. "She will take her death of cold. Run down, Lucy, and see if Laura Macaulay's umbrella is in the stand."

"I don't dare go. I am afraid of the lightning."

Miss Letitia went down a few steps and looked over the balusters. "It isn't there," she said.

Esther opened her door at the moment. "I want a little society," she remarked. "John is asleep. Fancy sleeping through such a thunderstorm."

"Where do you suppose your Aunt Deborah is?" asked Esther Letitia.

"In bed, I hope."

"Out on the hillside with Cowslip. I don't believe she would care if she were struck and killed if only that miserable cow escaped. I wish she had as much consideration for her family as she has for animals. Now, of course, somebody will have to go out and get her in."

"I will wake John," said Esther.

Her voice made a gentle accompaniment to the storm. They could not hear what she said, although the door was ajar, but above the sound of the tempest came an exclamation in John's deep bass that sounded suspiciously like "Damn that cow!"

Presently he came out, still grumbling, equipped in his oldest clothes.

"You had better take the lantern," advised Miss Letitia from her room. "The lantern is in the china closet cupboard, the right hand cupboard, on the middle shelf."

A terrific peal of thunder drowned the close of her remarks, and John plunged downstairs and out into the storm, trusting to the lightning to guide his steps.

"How terrible it would be if one of them should be struck," Lucy suggested with a little shiver, as she crouched down on her sister's bed. Esther went in to see how the children and the baby were faring. They were all peacefully sleeping. It took more than a little thing like a thunderstorm to wake them.

Meanwhile Miss Deborah, having fulfilled her duty in the station in life to which she had been called, was slowly making her way homeward. Her India rubbers were filled with water, which gurgled out in cold streams on her bare feet with every step she took. She was drenched to the skin, but it was such a warm night that she enjoyed it. In fact, the whole adventure was one that appealed to her daring spirit.

After two or three brilliant flashes of lightning there was a period of Ethiopian darkness through which she struggled toward the beacon lights of the house. Presently a shadowy form rose at her side.

Miss Deborah had a stout heart, but the apparition of a man at midnight in her garden gave her a fright. She staid her voice, however, and inquired sternly: "What are you doing here at this time of night, when all respectable people are in their beds?"

"Upon my word, I like that," answered John's voice. "What am I doing at this time of night? If all respectable people were in their beds I shouldn't have had this wild goose chase, but my wife insisted on my going after you."

"I am so relieved to find it is you, John. Poor fellow! It was a shame for them to send you out. Letitia can never learn that I am old enough to take care of myself. The cow is getting on all right. I covered her up in two thick blankets and put Laura Macaulay's umbrella over her, and I think—"

"John, confound the cow! The question is, how are you getting on? It is an awful night for pneumonia as a sequel to this escapade."

"I have never done what was expected of me in my whole life, John, and I am not likely to begin at my age."

Miss Deborah proved a true prophet. She did not even have a cold as a consequence of her adventure. Miss Deborah observed briskly. "It is hard you can't find comfort of saying 'I told you so.' When will you ever learn not to do such crazy things?"

"I am thankful you haven't made yourself ill, dear," returned Miss Letitia, "but it was just as crazy a thing for you to do."

"Well, I don't care. I am as strong as a horse and there is no reason why I should not do crazy things. I mean to do crazier and crazier things, Letitia. I think it is time I had my fling. And I accomplished my object. 'Cowslip' is well."

"I have no doubt she would have got well in any event," said Miss Letitia.

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TRAPPED IN A POKER GAME

(New York Sun.)

The dusk had deepened into darkness and the first snow of the season was driving across the prairie before half a gale from the northwest, when a man rode a tired horse up to the door of Pietro's roadside, on the old Fort Snelling road. He came neither by way of the Minneapolis trail nor by that from St. Paul, but straight across the open country, where there were in those days no better fences.

Pietro himself came to the door when he heard the sound of the hoofs and, seeing who his visitor was, he gave a long, low whistle of surprise and astonishment, but said nothing. The other man merely nodded and waved his hand inquiringly toward the door, but the fat little Italian shook his head vigorously and pointed to the corner of the house, whereupon the other led his horse around to the stable and entered the house from the rear.

He was met again by the host, who signified by a gesture the direction for him to take, and escorted him to a room upstairs. Not until after they were inside the room and the door was locked was a word spoken.

"What does it—?" began Pietro, but the other interrupted.

"Get me something to eat. I had five minutes to get away last night, and I made straight for the open. I dared not go anywhere else and I would not come here till dark. I have not eaten for twenty-four hours."

It seemed to be true, for when food and wine were brought he ate as if famished, while Pietro sat by in silence till he had satisfied himself. At length he leaned back, lighted the cigar which Pietro handed him, and said:

"Well, the game is up. That Marsden that you warned us against must have split, for the officers left St. Paul a week ago, and got to my place at 10 o'clock. Bob was on the lookout and we went different ways. He struck for the woods, but I'm going down the river if I can get away."

"Did you save any of the stuff?"

"We hadn't a minute, I tell you," said the stranger with an oath. "I've got a few hundred in my pocket, but not over a fifty in good money. You'll have to help me out."

"They haven't traced you here?"

Pietro's English was remarkable.

"No. You are safe enough, even if they had. It's a public house. But I threw them off all right unless they can follow a trail through a mile and a half of water. It is only a question of getting away from here. I'll have to stay for a few days."

Pietro nodded.

"And the plant?" he asked.

"I saw a blaze behind me two hours after I left. If they burned the house I reckon they didn't leave much of anything else, over and above what they took for evidence."

"Too bad, too bad," said Pietro. "Well, it was a good game while it lasted."

"Yes, and you got the most of it," growled the other.

"Come, now," said Pietro, with sudden viciousness